Just What We Need

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Just What We Need

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Summary

“I brought you a gift,” he finally said, “I killed that man for you.”

“No, Hannibal, you killed him for you. The only thing you did for me was make me the most likely suspect for your crimes. You’re good at that.”

Post-fall, Will and Hannibal have a fight, and Will's not sure they can come back from it.

Notes

While this is outright angst, we promise a happy ending! Our boys couldn't stay apart if they tried.

A huge thank you to Addison for the idea! We had so much fun writing this one!

See the end of the work for more notes

Will had all manner of scars that he carried with him.

Many were invisible, buried far enough in his mind that neither the pendulum nor the good doctor could access them to bring them to the surface. Others, Will wore on his skin.

He wasn't a masochist, a collector, but there were several he was rather proud of. The one across his abdomen that Hannibal had gifted him when he took away Will's chance for a family, that was a special scar. That was a scar Will spread his fingers over in the shower, one that Hannibal worshiped with his tongue when they were too sleepy to fuck but aching to touch each other.

The ones he had earned from the Dragon, made Will smiled to see. He had earned those. He had earned Hannibal through them, and Hannibal had earned him.

But the wound that was currently weeping blood from his left bicep as Hannibal rooted around with some ungodly instrument trying to find the bullet? He would hate this scar. He would hate it more than he hated anything else.

"I told you, Hannibal, I fucking *told you* to stop this!"

"Be still,"

"I was *trying!"* Will growled. "I was trying to stay still. In Canada. In Iceland. In goddamn Uzbekistan, Hannibal, it was *you* who had to keep *fucking* moving!"

Will turned his head to bite against his shoulder as Hannibal turned the forceps and tugged at the bullet tangled in Will's fascia. Slowly, deliberately, he worked it free.

"Perhaps you would have preferred to be arrested?"

Will snarled at him. "I would have *preferred* not to be run out of the country in the first place. But you always have to make a scene, don't you?"

Hannibal's eyes were dark as he dabbed blood from the wound, full of irritation. "Would you have me tamed, then? Declawed, kept like a housecat? Perhaps you find yourself longing for the dull days of your marriage-"

" *Don't* start that again," Will snapped. "You know that's not what I want. I've never asked you to stop killing."

"Are we not having that exact fight?"

Will hissed as Hannibal roughly began to bandage him. "No, you absolute *sadist* , we aren't. Maybe it sounds that way to *you* , since you never listen to me to begin with, but all I asked, all I've *ever* asked, is for you to stop drawing so much attention to us!"

Hannibal sighed. He wore the same expression he'd once used for people like Fredrick Chilton, a placating, slightly bored face he'd never before used on Will. "I enjoy a certain

amount of aesthetic-"

" *I* enjoy being able to remember what name is on my passport," Will interrupted. "I enjoy not being *shot* pushing you into a getaway car."

Hannibal opened his mouth to argue, and closed it again with a hum, concentrating instead on checking the tightness of Will's bandage. Will turned his face into his shoulder again with a groan and let him work. The silence could be sliced with a knife. When Hannibal let him go, Will yanked his arm away and stood up, shoving past him, hip to shoulder, to get out of the bathroom.

He was running low on whiskey.

He'd gotten the damn bottle open with his teeth by the time Hannibal followed him out, drying his hands on some scrunched up toilet paper.

"What are you doing?" Will asked him, wincing as the alcohol burned down his throat. "What are you *doing* , Hannibal? What are you trying to prove? To whom?" He took another swig of the bottle and pointed an accusing finger at his partner. "There's no Jack anymore, Hannibal. No Frederick. No Dolarhyde, we took care of that, at least I *thought* we had. Who are you trying to impress?"

"I do this for us, Will."

"Do you?" Will raised his brows, head tilting and eyes wide with pain and the crawling inevitability of drunkenness. "You don't have to impress me anymore either, Hannibal, I'm right here. At your side. Wherever you feel like dragging us next. And I am *tired* , do you understand? I'm *tired of this* ."

Hannibal reached for him. Will stepped back, out of range. He had things to pack. They'd have to be out of this safehouse before the police hunted them down, and he wasn't losing *another* comfortable shirt to Hannibal's compulsions.

Hannibal caught up to him halfway down the hall, dragging Will back against his chest and hooking his chin over his shoulder.

"Are you so unhappy, Will?" He murmured, his voice soft and low against Will's ear. Will shuddered in his arms, one hand coming up to his chest to link their fingers together.

"No," he said, "don't you see? That's the *point* . I've never been happier in my life. Why won't you let me keep it?"

Hannibal sighed, a rush of breath against Will's throat that he followed up with the softest brush of lips. "The next one," he said, "The next will be our last, Will."

"It won't if things keep going the way they are."

"Then things will change." Hannibal's fingers slid underneath the hem of Will's t-shirt, fingers running over the raised ridge of the curved scar. "I want to preserve our life together, Will."

“Then let us have one, Hannibal,” Will sighed, exhausted, exasperated. “Let us have something to preserve. Let us actually live the life we’ve killed for.”

“We will.” Hannibal turned his nose against Will’s jaw, just breathing him in, holding him close until Will sighed and put his weight back against him. “I promise, Will.” They were swaying by the time Will gave up the bottle to Hannibal’s seeking fingers.

It took Hannibal eleven days to break his promise.

It took Will half an hour to shove some clothes into a duffel bag and get gone, his latest passport and credit cards in his pocket, phone screen kicked in and left without a sim card on the kitchen floor for Hannibal to find.

Will didn’t ask for much, he never had. He hadn’t wanted Hannibal in a cage. He hadn’t wanted to take his life, he’d wanted to share it. When they’d built their plans, weeks before Hannibal had surrendered himself to Jack outside of wintry Wolf Trap, they had discussed finding one place, far away, to make their own. A place they could return to after travels. A place Will could have some dogs, and Hannibal could grow grapes over a trellis. A place to live, together.

Will had lost count of how many names he’d had. Had lost count of how many countries they’d visited. He had lost count of the kisses and passionate fucking. He had lost count of the injuries and how long they’d taken to heal. He’d lost himself, somewhere, too, along the way. And he’d obviously lost Hannibal. To pride and preening, to the desire to prove something he no longer had to prove to anyone.

That’s what hurt the most, if he were honest. Though the bullet hole still healing in his arm hurt like a bitch, too.

Will would have killed with him. He already had. But Hannibal couldn’t kill without making it a production, a show. He was, in the end, a serial killer, with a serial killer’s compulsions. Will had always thought him better than that, smarter, but it seemed Hannibal was as subject to his pathology as any other man.

There was a time Will had thought him something more than a man, too.

He took the comfortable shirts with him. He didn’t care if it was all Hannibal’s, bought with Hannibal’s money. Will’s funds would run dry soon enough, he wasn’t going to be naked for it. He left the cuff links, the watch. The wedding ring.

He took the photo, printed from the old days of Tattlecrime, the closest they had to a real picture of the two of them. He’d always intended to have more, enough to hang on walls and set on shelves.

Hannibal could fill his own shelves with photos of his masterpieces.

Hannibal was not a heavy sleeper, but he liked to rise early to check the local markets. Will slipped out while he was gone, and was out of Greece before Hannibal even knew he’d left.

Hannibal found him in France, which was ironic. The first time he'd taken Will there, he'd hated it.

Or, he supposed, Will had hated Paris in particular. Hannibal had promised to take him to the coast, to the beaches that ran forever, the mountains and the scraggy little trees he knew Will would love. The quaint villages. Cookie-cutter houses.

He'd merely stopped to fill their freezers first, and that had happened in Paris. And two days later they were on a plane to Argentina and Hannibal never did get to show Will Antibes. He found it on his own, it seemed.

He left him to his own devices for a few more days, as Hannibal planned their reunion. He kept an eye on Will's movements, of course, through the scant security cameras in the cafes and shops Will frequented. He looked beautiful. He'd let his beard grow in again, and wore a hat Hannibal actually found quite fetching on his husband.

He didn't wear his wedding ring, which Hannibal found far less fetching.

He supposed he owed Will another proposal with his apology. He could do that. He could certainly put in the effort for his Will, if that was what he wanted. To be wooed again. To be claimed again.

His Will was a creature of habit, slowly feeling out a routine that Hannibal memorized. He'd rented a little apartment above a shop, and he spent much of his time down by the docks, seeking work. The money he'd taken from their accounts would not sustain him forever, but nor would occasional trips out in a fishing boat.

However, Will's stubborn streak ran as deep as Hannibal's own, he knew, and the looming threat of poverty was unlikely to send him back into Hannibal's arms. Once, Will had said Hannibal no longer needed to impress him, but it was clear that was no longer true.

Will took a three day trip out onto the sea. Hannibal took his chance.

The man who would be the cornerstone of their reunion had mocked Will's struggling accent and his occasional slip into a word more Creole than Parisian. He'd had no work for "American trash," as he'd put it, and though Will's fists had clenched at his sides, he had not fought back. Hannibal had removed the problem on his behalf, stringing the man up in his own nets and taking the choicest of cuts for their meals.

Will's tiny apartment had a poor excuse for a lock that could be wriggled open with a hairpin and a credit card. The kitchen was deplorably small, and though Hannibal knew he could cook, Will appeared to have been surviving almost entirely on pasta and the portions of fish given to him as part of his wages. His seasonings included three different jars of salt and no rosemary.

Hannibal made do with what he could pick up on short notice, and when Will finally returned, weary and stinking of fish and salt, it was to a warm apartment and the thick, savory smell of a roast.

Hannibal smiled at him from the table, standing up to greet him, and frowned when Will immediately turned on his heel to head downstairs. When he heard the door below slam he sighed, moving to lean out the window to seek for Will on the street below. He saw him presently. Will kept his eyes on Hannibal as he deliberately set a cigarette between his lips and lit up. He didn't stop staring him down as he smoked, and Hannibal frowned in displeasure.

He had never liked the smell of smoke on Will, it cheapened his individual odor. He wondered how long this had been a habit.

When Will was finished he made his way back inside, but he wasn't much friendlier upon re-entry.

"What have you done."

"I've made dinner."

"And who are we having?" Will asked, crossing his arms and leaning back against the cheap flatpack cupboard that made up the entirety of his pantry. When Hannibal blinked, Will rolled his eyes. "You've been feeding me flesh for years, Hannibal. You've taught me to prepare it. I know what it smells like."

Hannibal's lips pursed gently. "An insufferably rude individual who seemed to value accents over abilities."

Will blinked at him, running his tongue over his teeth before slowly nodding. "You killed the man who wouldn't give me work."

"I did."

"Someone who lives three houses down, has two children in Cologne, and an active business that he *owns* , Hannibal, that man?"

Hannibal stared at him. The practiced look of innocence would have been at home on a particularly malevolent child. Will laughed humorlessly and headed off towards the bedroom.

"I made your favorite," Hannibal said, following him into the scant space. Will dug a duffle bag out from under the bed, already half full, and began to shove things into it.

"I'll eat it on the run." Will considered and then discarded a particularly ratty pair of pajama pants, instead folding a thin blanket as neatly as he could.

"We have time before our flight."

"Before our *flight?* " Will turned to stare at him. Hannibal didn't recognize him; his Will had never looked quite so uncomprehending when looking at him before.

"Wow," Will said, drawing the sound out and ending it with a harsh puff of air. "You honestly… that was your entire plan? You'd show up, ruin my life, and I'd come crawling,

begging you to whisk me away?"

It was such a perversion of Hannibal's intentions that Hannibal did not have an immediate response. "I brought you a gift," he finally said, "I killed that man for you."

"No, Hannibal, you killed him for *you* . The only thing you did for me was make me the most likely suspect for your crimes. You're good at that."

"That was never my intention," Hannibal replied tersely. Will tilted his head at him.

"No? Just this time, or in general? Chronologically or alphabetically, Hannibal, please, *enlighten me* , what wasn't your intention?"

"Will."

"What?" He looked at Hannibal again and there was no warmth there, there was no fondness, no fire. He looked at Hannibal like a man shattered, a man disappeared. Hannibal felt hollow at the sight. After a moment, Will sighed, bringing a hand up to rub his eyes. "Why did you do it?"

"Will, I -"

"Why did you kill him?" Will asked again, dropping his hand and looking at Hannibal again. "Because he was rude to me? Really? What about the bellhop at the first hotel I checked into who wouldn't let the clerk rent me a room because he didn't think I was clean shaven enough. What about the grumpy bus driver? What about the fish I didn't catch because they had better things to do, Hannibal, what about them?"

Hannibal was taken aback. He'd seen Will angry before, certainly. He'd seen him livid. He'd even earned such rage himself but never like this. He had hoped to gather Will in his arms and kiss him. He had hoped to feed him from his fork and laugh together over the fact that the dish was much more cultured than the man who had given their meat to it had ever been. He had hoped to make love to Will on the tiny creaking bed until his voice pulled taut and carried out into the salty morning air.

He'd hoped for something better than this.

"You don't kill for me, Hannibal, not anymore. Not since you courted me and set my mind alight. You have me now, or you did, for a while." Will shrugged helplessly, arms out at his sides as he considered the man in front of him. "I told you that I don't want this anymore. I don't need this."

"I had hoped -"

"You had hoped to, what, woo me with your ego? No, Hannibal, I'm beyond that. We're beyond that. You let me see you, beyond that."

Hannibal struggled for a response, the first time he could recall doing so in many, many years. "I am doing my best for you, Will."

“No.” Will shook his head, and this time, there was more sorrow than rage. More heartbreak than fury. “No, Hannibal, you’re doing the same thing you always have, and none of it has ever been for me. You were just lucky enough for me to be entranced by a picture you would have painted anyway.”

Will hauled the duffle bag over his shoulder. “I need to be out of town before his wife reports him missing. Which means I’ll need a new passport.”

“I have one,” Hannibal said immediately, latching on to another option. “I have a pair. You can have yours, if you come with me to the airport.”

Will’s gaze was ice. “Are you threatening me?”

“I wouldn’t say-“

“No. That’s not how we’re doing this.” Will held out his hand, palm up. “You’re going to give me my fortieth goddamn identity, and then you’re going to let me walk out that door, because you keep claiming to love me.”

“Will,” Hannibal’s voice didn’t have the breath to carry it. He cleared his throat as Will continued to wait. Hannibal sucked his top lip between his teeth and turned slowly to make his way to his own bag, still by the door, properly packed and ready to go. He returned presently, checking the passport to make sure it was the one he had for Will.

“I do love you,” he told him gently, passing it over. Will folder his fingers around it and ran his thumb over the crest at the front. He was German, this time. “Will, please.”

“Then let me go.”

“Why?”

Will had never seen Hannibal look so broken. Something caught, like a fish hook, against his heart and tugged, ripping yet another unseen scar through him. He stepped near enough to set his hand to Hannibal’s chest, fingers spreading slowly over his heart just to feel its languid beat pick up from the contact.

“Because the man I love would do that for me,” Will told him gently. “Because to the man I love, Hannibal, I matter more than a kill count and a tableaux.” He looked up, close enough to kiss, though neither moved to breach that distance. “If you see him around, remind him of that for me, will you?”

When he walked out the door, the pain was physical. Hannibal stood by the window for a long time after. Dinner went cold, and then stiff. The bedding still smelled like Will. He slept there, and missed his flight.

He let Will go for two months before he found him again.

Will had a type, when it came to settling down. He liked isolated cabins, and he liked beaches. Since the two rarely overlapped and he lacked the funds to buy an entire cabin

anyway, he ended up in another tiny apartment by the shore. This one had a hot plate instead of a stove. Hannibal would have hated it.

He still had the photo. He set it up on the nightstand and imagined it was their nightstand back in Greece, that Hannibal had not drawn attention to them, that they were curled up in bed talking about Plato and Dante and dogs.

Sometimes he would come home and think, for a moment, that he smelled Hannibal's cologne. That things had been shifted just an inch since he last saw them. He thought nothing of it, until the first text came.

You should eat better than that. If not for me, then for yourself. Do you remember when I taught you to make bouillabaisse? You complained that it had more letters than ingredients and butchered the pronunciation. I found it more charming than I should have. -H

And another, a moment later.

I do love you, Will.

The problem was, that Will loved him too. He loved him desperately. And he missed Hannibal beyond all reason. Will read over the message again and again. The next day he went out to buy lobster and fennel.

Will found work where he could, though he noticed that this new identity had a heftier allowance than his other had. He doubted that was incidental. Will dirtied his hands to the elbow fixing boat motors. He fished, when he had the time. He fed the strays that hung out around the docks and resisted taking any of them home. He smoked sometimes, but not often.

He lay in bed late at night with a hand between his legs and one between his teeth and stroked himself to thoughts of Hannibal. He'd think of the early mornings waking up together, light just coming up behind the heavy curtains that closed Hannibal's bedroom against the world, of the way Hannibal would smile at him, so wide his eyes would narrow with it before leaning in to kiss Will good morning. He'd think of Hannibal fucking him hard against the walls in his office, pushing them both to their limits and beyond, working together to bring about two orgasms each. He'd think about the shack they'd recuperated in after the fall, and how Hannibal had spent what felt like hours tracing the contours of Will's face as though to memorize him.

When he came, it was loudly. He wouldn't sleep for hours after, watching shadows move over his ceiling through half-open eyes.

I think about where those mugs are now, the chipped ones we'd sip coffee from as the sea raged outside and the rain threatened to melt the roof above our heads. I hope they stayed together. Forgive me feeling maudlin, the weather turned not long ago and I found myself reaching for you across the sheets. Please try to sleep more, Will, you look exhausted. I love you. -H

If the text messages had not proved Hannibal's proximity, the content certainly did. Will found himself looking over his shoulder, double checking the locks, leaving things precisely

placed to ensure they were where he left them when he returned.

If Hannibal had come to bring Will home, he was taking the long way around. He didn't confront Will. He was never anywhere to be seen. But he was everywhere, regardless.

The blushing teenage barista at Will's favorite coffee shop handed him his drink before he could get his wallet out. "Your husband already stopped by, Sir. He said it's on him today."

Will drank black coffee while tucked into the window seat, staring at his phone. Waiting. Waiting. Waiting.

I regret not giving you a proper wedding. Although the one we had, struggling together in the crashing waves, was certainly memorable. And perhaps you would have preferred that to the spectacle of it all.

There was a moment, half asleep in that little shack, where you told me the results had not mattered to you. Only that we died or survived together.

I apologize, Will. I cannot go forward without you. But perhaps I can make your path a bit easier. I love you. -H

Will woke the next morning to workers there to replace his hotpot with a proper stove. God only knew what Hannibal had bribed his landlord with. Will laughed until he cried, hiccuping behind his hand and frightening the men in his kitchen.

That night he made himself a steak dinner, properly roasted potatoes, he had a glass of wine. He left the windows wide open and sat on the windowsill as he ate. He went to bed happily buzzed and the bottle empty. He left the dishes til morning.

It took a lot for Hannibal not to sneak in and wash them for him.

He had developed his own routine around Will's, not so much following as co-existing. He had coffee with Will, two towns apart. He had lunch with him, turning Will's wedding ring around his finger where it rested above his own. Sometimes he managed to sleep. Sometimes he was lucky and he didn't dream.

When he did, it was often of the fall, and the shack after.

Will had taken the water at his back when they fell, protecting Hannibal with his own body. That was the last thing Hannibal remembered before he'd lost consciousness. He'd woken to Will as well, stroking his face, kissing his cheek, shaking from cold and adrenaline and begging for him to wake up.

He had promised Will he would wake up to him every day after.

He had broken many promises since, Hannibal knew. It stuck in his throat and made him feel sick. It made him feel guilt, which he had been certain he'd outgrown. Will did always bring out the best in him.

The boy who makes your coffee would be in love with you, were he old enough to understand the feeling. I cannot even find it in me to be angry with the boy, child that he is.

I believe I was in love with you the first time, when I served you breakfast in a motel in Minnesota. You disliked me on principle. It was endearing, as only you can be. I loved you a second time, and a third, and I find that now I wake every day reminding myself of each one.

I love you, Will. I'd like to fix things. -H

Will did not answer, because that was how he'd chosen to move on with himself, but Hannibal saw weariness in him the next day. Perhaps the messages pained him. Hannibal could not find it in himself to feel guilty. If Will was pained, it was because he felt something, still. Hannibal would hold on to that.

Will tormented him. In his daily routines. In the way he tanned with the building summer heat. In the brightness of his joy when Hannibal left him a gift.

Will loved him, no matter his resistance to it, and he brought Hannibal suffering and hope by that alone. Hannibal began to watch him more, for longer hours. Once, he picked the lock long after Will had gone to bed, and sat by the bedroom door to hear him breathing.

And to hear other things, when the vivid heat of a dream woke Will.

Hannibal bit his lip, eyes slowly closing, as through the door Will's breathing hitched and broke on a moan, as his voice pulled keening and lovely on Hannibal's name, as he whispered to himself, fantasies, promises, beautiful filthy things. When Will came with a soft cry, Hannibal allowed himself a sound as well, just a tiny thing, hidden beneath Will's panting breath. He breathed him in and left the apartment silent as a shadow, locking the door behind himself.

He continued buying Will's morning coffee and charming the cafe staff. He continued with his quiet plans when Will was in places too conspicuous to follow him. He continued to love him, more than anything.

The first time you made love to me it was winter, and we were trapped under a pile of all the blankets you could find in your home, while the dogs crowded the fireplace, do you remember? That was the only time I looked at snow and didn't flinch, didn't let other memories leave footprints in it.

I would go to the ends of the earth with you, Will, always. -H

Will had noticed the lack of murders on the news that could in any way be Hannibal's. He enjoyed it, yes, he was good at it, yes, but he was also pretentious about it. Hannibal wouldn't just kill and leave a body behind, he had to set it up, to display it, to tease with it. Nothing, not a single thing, going on six months now.

God, had it really been six months of them being apart? Will couldn't believe it. The thought felt like an old aching bruise that just wouldn't go down. He hated the fact that his hand had

tanned over the mark his ring usually left pale. He hated the fact that he woke up alone. He hated the fact that Hannibal had done this to them both, but he could not hate him.

Will spent more time at the docks, the strays all knew him now, came close for a pat and some fish he'd deliberately kept for them. Some lay at his feet as though protecting him, though he could hardly guess what from. It was quiet here, isolated, and while Will knew, he could feel how close Hannibal was, he had never been afraid of him.

What had been the purpose of leaving, if he would let Hannibal stay? Not living *with* him, but beside him, so thoroughly intertwined. Hannibal was present in every move Will made, every waking moment.

One night, Will crawled into bed to find his sheets and pillows smelling entirely, unmistakably of Hannibal. It was the only cruel thing he'd done since finding Will. Will curled into them, and wept, and did not find peace until the sun had risen.

It seems we have always brought each other pain, haven't we? And yet we have always managed to find something beautiful in that.

In my mind, I've sought your forgiveness too many times to count. I run out of ways to speak the words.

If it hurts you, Will, I will leave. But I would much rather stay, if not together, then somewhere I can offer you what I have to give. I love you. -H

Don't go .

It was the only message Will ever wrote back, but the panic that flooded him, the nausea that gripped him, at the thought that Hannibal would leave and he would never see him again had Will scrambling with the tiny keyboard, working through the message far longer than necessary until his fingers found the right keys, spelled the words properly.

Don't go, don't go, please don't go…

In the morning, Will took one of the boats out and returned only when the sun was setting. His strays welcomed him at the dock with wagging tails and lolling tongues and happy little whines. It felt almost like home again, another pack that he had gathered for himself, a family he had made out of scraps and wreckage.

He just wished he had what he needed for it to be complete.

Mooring the little boat down, Will settled on his knees among the dogs, unable to keep the smile from his face as they nuzzled up and climbed all over him. Always so eager, always so gentle. Some had been half-starved when Will had started feeding them, now their coats were lush and thick, tails at attention, eyes soft.

But none had collars. At least, they didn't used to.

One of the smaller dogs, a strange little mutt who limped about slowly, but could run with the best of them if he felt so inclined was scratching at a thin leather cord around his neck.

Attached to it, an intricately folded envelope that Will tore free in his desperation to get it open.

Within, familiar handwriting, familiar warmth.

Familiar words.

I think it's about time we were almost polite again.

The card had stated an address and a time. Seven o'clock, always. Dinner. Will was going to be late and the thought delighted him. He walked, as it was near, and laughed when several of the dogs trailed after him, clearly used to the path and the place they were going.

Of course they were.

Back from the shore, but still within sight of it, Hannibal had settled into a little cottage. Smaller than Will would have expected, with the gate to the front garden left open. There were bowls just inside, overflowing with fresh water. Will caught another laugh behind his hand, gleeful beyond reason.

The dogs settled in a comfortable pile by the bowls, tongues lolling out as they watched Will's path up to the door. It smelled like home, even before the door opened, spilling light out onto the grass.

And there he was. Hannibal, in the doorway, dusting his hands on an apron. He'd grown his hair out. It was more gray than Will remembered. The thought made him freeze, halfway up the path. He'd missed so much. Hannibal looked so *tired* .

There was anger, white and hot. There was fear, and betrayal. But there was *Hannibal* , and suddenly Will was running, racing the last few feet to slam into him.

"Stupid, you're so stupid," Will whispered, wrapping his arms around him and kissing Hannibal deep. Familiar arms, familiar palms, so warm over Will's back, so reassuring, so *safe* … "If you ever do that to me again I will *kill you* ."

"Yes," Hannibal sighed, hands on either side of Will's face, holding him close, pressing their foreheads together when they parted to catch their breaths. Will bit his lip on a helpless sound and brought his hands up to hold Hannibal's wrists loosely, just letting himself believe that he was actually here, he was *here* , not part of Will's exhausted mind, not some cruel dream he would wake from, sweaty and aching.

He laughed, after a moment, helpless. "A place like this can't have a good kitchen,"

Hannibal's smile showed his teeth and Will pressed himself closer, just breathing him in, just feeling Hannibal's heart beat against his own.

"I've spent time upgrading," Hannibal murmured, stroking Will's hair from his face, kissing his temple. "I needed it to be just what we needed, nothing more, and nothing less."

Will hadn't thought Hannibal would want to stay, that the peace Will had found here would make up for the diminutive size. He had thought, when he'd allowed himself to think about it, that they would move on again if Hannibal earned forgiveness. He peered over Hannibal's shoulder, curiosity and hope at war in his chest.

"Show me?" He asked, breathless.

Hannibal had somehow managed to fit the entirety of a modern kitchen into the first floor of the cottage. He'd sacrificed the dining space, but they really only needed the little table for the two of them. Perhaps someday, when Will had his full of ocean breeze, they would move inland, some place with room for a dinner party.

For now, there was the kitchen, and the living room, and two bedrooms upstairs, one tiny and packed tight with two desks.

The other, Will hesitated in the doorway of. He knew the risks of letting himself in any further, when they hadn't even discussed anything yet.

But it reminded him so much of their earliest moments together, dark wood and navy sheets, heavy curtains for the windows. So out of place in the little cottage, yet so very familiar. He could be home here. He *wanted* to be home here.

He reached back, hand outstretched for Hannibal to take and hummed when he did. Will let himself be enveloped in an embrace, Hannibal's broad, warm chest at his back as he held Will tight and secure, chin against Will's shoulder.

"The armor won't fit in here," he murmured.

"Don't need one."

Will snorted, squeezing Hannibal's hand, and turned in his hold to set his hands to Hannibal's collarbones instead. He did look tired, but Will supposed he looked much the same. Together, they were ageless, time stood still. Apart, it battered them like waves on the rocks. Will leaned in to kiss the corner of his mouth, parting his lips as Hannibal turned his head to kiss him properly and Will smiled into it.

"You broke into my house," Will murmured, grinning, eyes closed. Hannibal nuzzled him.

"I politely picked the lock."

"God, you're a nightmare," Will sighed, wrapping his arms around Hannibal's neck again and pushing up on his toes, just to feel their noses brush together with the movement. "I want to keep the dogs,"

"I suspected," Hannibal replied, just as low, just as warm. "Three practically live here already, the rest is up to you."

"Just like that?"

“Will.” Hannibal’s eyes were earnest. Sincerity cloaked him. “I would give you anything you asked.”

“I can’t handle another lie, Hannibal.” Will’s voice trembled. The neediness embarrassed him, but he couldn’t hold it back.

“I couldn’t lose you again,” Hannibal promised.

“You wouldn’t. Next time, I’ll kill you.”

For some reason, Hannibal smiled. “Vicious creature,” he praised, cupping Will’s jaw.

One kiss became another, and another, until Hannibal growled low, sending familiar chills down Will’s spine. He pushed forward, and Will pushed back.

“No,” Will murmured, “Dinner first.”

For what may have been the first time in his life, Hannibal said “to hell with dinner.”

Will couldn’t argue that. He grinned, fingers winding hard around the soft collar of Hannibal’s shirt, and yanked him in to kiss again.

Six months. Six agonizing months. It felt longer than when they had been separated by prison, longer than anything Hannibal had ever experienced. He had not felt truly unmoored, truly amputated, since he was orphaned and starving in the snow. Now he clung to Will as desperately as the man clutched at him, bit into his mouth and snarled when Will growled in pleasure against him.

Feral, powerful, stubborn man. Hannibal had never loved another so much, Hannibal had never given his entire heart before. He caught Will’s hair and tugged, enough to set his teeth to Will’s throat instead, weathering the scratch of nails down his arm as Will moaned and fought him in equal measure.

There was such intimacy in understanding, such vulnerability. Will felt flayed alive again when Hannibal breathed him in, he felt like the man held his heart in his hand, ribs torn asunder, and didn’t hurt him. Instead, he worshiped.

“Bed,” Will groaned, catching his fingers in Hannibal’s hair in turn. “Bed, Hannibal, *now* , I need your cock in my mouth.”

They stumbled together, Will’s clumsy fingers scattering buttons in their wake. Tumbling into the sheets yielded another problem: for Will to get his mouth anywhere good, Hannibal would have to let go.

“Never again,” Hannibal swore into the tender skin beneath Will’s jaw. Will laughed and shoved at him.

“We’d have to separate at some point,” he whispered, reaching between them to undo his belt, “let me touch you, god I need to touch you.”

Somehow, they maneuvered. Will ended up pushed into the pillows, Hannibal's hands in his hair. Hannibal kicked out of his pants and Will grabbed his thighs, hauling him up to straddle Will's chest.

This position didn't give Will quite as much control as he'd hungered for, but it undid Hannibal in moments. Will lapped at his cock, taking the head in his mouth and trying to memorize the shape of it, inch by inch. He felt like he'd forgotten.

Hannibal pressed his forehead to the wall above the headboard, hips barely shifting against Will's mouth, desperate to at once make this last and to come quickly. He gasped as Will drew his teeth over him, dropped a hand to clutch at Will's curls as he took Hannibal deeper. God, he'd missed this. He'd missed Will's hunger and sating it. He'd missed him being so close.

"Will." Will groaned, fingers pressing tight to Hannibal's thighs. "Will, let go for a moment, just a moment, please -"

Will did, a sound of deep displeasure pulling from his throat before Hannibal sank down enough to kiss it away. "Wait," he breathed, sitting back and yanking Will down the bed before swinging a leg over Will's chest to straddle him backwards. He arched his back, enough that Will caught the head of his cock between his lips just as Hannibal took Will deep into his own mouth.

Both moaned in tandem, thighs trembling, Will's spreading wider on the bed as Hannibal grasped him behind the knee and held him open.

The last time it had been this desperate, they'd fled their first safe house, and Will was still too high on the excitement of it all to be upset. They'd left bruises up and down each other, and nearly gotten themselves kicked out of the roach motel they'd laid low in, not that Hannibal would have complained.

Now, Will dragged Hannibal down against him, swallowing hard and bucking his own hips impatiently. Hannibal pulled off only long enough to shove his own fingers deep into his mouth. When he licked teasingly at Will's cock once more, it was accompanied by a press of fingers to Will's entrance.

Will pulled away with a gasp, Hannibal's cock smacking wetly against his cheek. "God, you *better*. I swear, Hannibal, if I don't get you in me tonight-"

Hannibal urged a finger into him and rolled his hips, silencing Will with a rough thrust of his cock. Will choked and moaned around him, nails digging into the meat of Hannibal's ass to keep him close.

Will seemed tighter than Hannibal remembered, or perhaps that was simply romanticized thinking. Hannibal swallowed around the head of Will's cock, working another finger into him and curving them both, searching.

Will's eagerness came through in the way he whimpered around Hannibal's cock, pulling back to just tongue the head as he caught his breath and tried to squeeze his thighs closed

around Hannibal. He groaned low when Hannibal set his elbows to the bed, preventing Will from closing himself as he worked his fingers in him. He alternated between swallowing Will deep and teasing him, both were turning his limbs to jelly.

“Hannibal, fuck -” Will shuddered, thighs trembling as he arched up into him, pushing Hannibal’s fingers deeper to find the place he needed him to tease. He worked Hannibal with his hand for the moment, eyes glazed, half open, his own cock rock-hard in Hannibal’s mouth. “God, I’m so close,”

Hannibal hummed, pulling back to kiss the insides of Will’s thighs, to bite one, hard enough to pull a curse from Will, to feel his nails dig into Hannibal’s thighs in retribution. He turned his fingers as Will wanted them and relished the broken cry that won him. Remarkable man, Hannibal adored him entirely.

“Good,” Hannibal told him, teasing a lick up the length of Will’s cock to the head. “I’ve missed tasting you.”

That was enough, words that Will himself had heard echoed in his own mind for weeks. He rolled his hips, chasing wet heat and careful thrusts, shaking as Hannibal worked him over.

“Oh fuck, oh *fuck-“* Hannibal wrapped his lips around the head of Will’s cock and sucked, coaxing out every drop of fluid as Will’s orgasm rolled through him, powerful and overwhelming. Hannibal’s fingers never stopped, urging Will through his peak, until there was nothing more for him to give and he was shoving at Hannibal.

Hannibal released Will with a wet, indecent sound, freeing his fingers from the tight clutch. “I’ve missed that look on your face,” he said to Will. Straightening out, he reached for lubrication in the bedside drawer. Will was caught between squeezing his thighs shut tight or spreading them wide. In the end, Hannibal made the decision for him. He kissed Will, licking into his mouth, claiming him until Will loosened and Hannibal could shove between his thighs once more.

“You always have to make a production of it,” Will accused. The words were familiar, but the sentiment was softer. Will was smiling when Hannibal looked, happier than he’d seemed in weeks.

“I always have to make it worthy of you,” Hannibal corrected. He nudged the slick head of his cock against Will, feeling the give as his body slowly opened up.

Will snorted but didn’t argue, eyes hooded as he kept them on Hannibal, as he watched the pleasure flicker behind his eyes at the tightness, the heat, the familiarity of being in Will again. Will cursed, dropping a hand over his face as he drew his knees up and sank deeper into the bed, Hannibal pushing heavy above him.

“Do you have any idea how beautiful you are?” Hannibal murmured, drawing his teeth over Will’s jaw, smiling as Will grinned.

“I’m a mess of scars and bones,” Will replied, licking his lips, gasping as Hannibal thrust deeper, seating himself fully, properly within him, Will’s soft cock trapped between their

bellies.

“Kintsugi,” Hannibal countered, and Will snorted, slipping his fingers into Hannibal’s hair and tugging him down to kiss as Hannibal pulled slowly back and just as slowly thrust back in. With a whimper, Will dropped one hand back to press to the headboard, levering himself down harder to meet Hannibal’s thrusts. God he’d missed this. He’d missed the heat of him, the power he kept like electricity under pale skin. Will loved everything Hannibal was, he found him fascinating and argumentative and deplorable and exhausting and he could never be parted from him again.

“Harder,” he breathed, arching his back and grinning when Hannibal caught his hair to keep him there, pressed his lips to Will’s throat to suck a bruise there as he acquiesced, shoving hard and quick into the willing, wild thing beneath him.

“Anything,” he promised, voice rough, breath hitching, “always, Will.”

Will’s body ached and sang, conflicting pleasures that had his toes curling. He dug his heels into the bed, rocking back against Hannibal in fitful, exhausted shoves. He wanted to consume him, to pull Hannibal into his skin and seal them together so they would never be apart again.

Between them, Will’s cock jerked with every sharp thrust, hard again despite himself. Hannibal had always been good at pushing Will beyond what he thought he could take, even before they’d started sleeping together. Will gasped for breath and clung to Hannibal, digging his heels into him.

“Together,” Will demanded, “Together, this time.”

Hannibal growled his appreciation into Will’s throat, gripping his hips with bruising pressure as their movements shook the bed’s huge and heavy frame.

It was Will, this time, who bit down hard as Hannibal came inside him, marking the man as his own again, claiming him in that primal, animalistic way of claws and teeth and blood. He followed Hannibal over within moments, shaking from adrenaline, weak with pleasure as they tangled in the sheets and panted to catch their breaths.

Will reached blindly for the blankets, catching a corner and tugging enough to cover them where they lay.

"Remarkable boy," Hannibal purred against him, scenting Will's hair, kissing rough against his stubbled cheek. Will just grinned against him, spreading scar-heavy fingers through the hair on Hannibal's chest.

"I have you," he promised. "I'm here."

With a hum, Hannibal nuzzled up beneath Will's chin and let himself doze. Dinner could wait, could be warmed up on the stove or just kept for breakfast if they slept through.

They had time.

The boy in the café blushed twice as dark now that they took breakfast there together, crushing madly on both of them and barely able to stutter out their order to confirm it for them. Sweet thing, young and naïve. Will snorted into the back of his hand as they watched him stumble back to the counter to ring up their order and start making the coffee.

"Was he like this every time you came in?" Will asked.

"Every time," Hannibal confirmed, amused, turning his cheek against Will's hair as they both shamelessly watched the kid try to pretend he didn't see them looking.

“Poor thing never knew what hit him,” Will mused, “he’s got terrible taste.”

“I beg to differ.”

“We’re old enough to be his father. And serial killers, can’t forget that one.” Will tilted his head back, letting both Hannibal *and* the boy get a look at the brutal hickey his scarf had barely been covering. Something clattered loudly to the ground behind the counter.

“And yet you torment the poor thing.”

Will shrugged. “He likes to look. It’s harmless to give him some fuel for his fantasies.”

“Christ, how long does it take you to make a single latte?”

The new voice was loud, carrying clearly in the small cafe. The gentleman at the counter was no one either of them recognized, flashy and derisive in a way no one in their small shoreside village was. Tourist, then, or businessman. He had the boy behind the counter trembling already.

"Sorry, Sir, it won't be long."

"It won't be long,” the man mocked, flashing a Rolex as he very deliberately did not check the time. “Unbelievable, what kind of service is this?”

“‘M sorry,” the boy mumbled back, ducking to pick up whatever he’d dropped when he’d been ogling Will and rushing to steam it clean before grinding more coffee for a new cup. He didn’t look over to the two of them as he quickly made up the man’s order, hands trembling enough when he passed it over that some flowed over into the saucer and the man scoffed.

“Heart tartare,” Will muttered, eyes scanning the man’s form as he made a show of mopping up the spillage with a mountain of napkins he deliberately left on the counter after.

“Impossible,” Hannibal replied, voice rough against Will’s ear. “There’s no heart to work with.”

Will snorted, and cast his eyes to the young man behind the counter again, sending him a soft smile when he looked helplessly at the two of them. He flushed bright and ducked his head, but he was smiling again as he went back to making the coffee they had ordered.

“Liver pate,” Will amended. “And kidney pie.”

“Would we share?”

“It’s only fair. He gave me that free cookie the other day.”

“Will.” Hannibal was breathless, his arm tight around Will’s waist, his fingers digging into his hip. “It would be unfair to tease me now. I’m already arranging the grocery list.”

Will grinned, sharp-fanged. “A treat now and then will hardly spoil you.”

“Vicious, brilliant creature,” Hannibal whispered.

End Notes

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